

**Remarks by Tim Keeney
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***The Role of Aquaculture in Meeting Global Seafood Demand Conference*
Seattle, Washington
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Good morning and thank you for coming today. I appreciate the opportunity to be here and want to extend a special thanks to the Norwegian Embassy for sponsoring this event along with Aquanet – Canada's Research Network in Aquaculture; the University of Washington School of Marine Affairs; the University of Washington School of Aquatic and Fisheries Science; the Western Regional Aquaculture Center; and the Pacific Aquaculture Caucus.

We value our research and policy dialog links with Norway and with Canada, two countries we have much to learn from – and share with – in the world of aquaculture.

As it turns out, today's conference is especially timely. As many of you know, on June 7, NOAA submitted to Congress, on behalf of the Administration, *The National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2005* for consideration and action. It was a big week for NOAA and – as I said to packed houses at a constituent briefing and at a Capitol Hill Oceans Week panel on aquaculture – this legislation is an excellent first step.

Right now, there is no clear mechanism for the permitting of marine aquaculture in federal waters. This regulatory uncertainty is widely acknowledged as the major barrier to the development of offshore aquaculture in the U.S.

The transmittal of the Act two weeks ago fulfilled the Administration's U.S. Ocean Action Plan commitment to propose national offshore aquaculture legislation in the 109th Congress. The Act also responds directly to the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy's recommendations that NOAA develop a comprehensive, environmentally sound permitting and regulatory program for offshore aquaculture.

It's important to emphasize several points about the legislation:

- Central to the Offshore Act is the establishment of rigorous environmental standards, but first we must get authority from Congress to do so. Once Congress enacts this legislation, we look forward to working with all stakeholders, states, and fisheries management councils to design the proper environmental and other standards before a single permit is issued.
- The U.S. has made great strides in recent years to rebuild America's wild fisheries. Aquaculture is another option, not mean to compete with wild harvest but to complement them. Even when our wild stocks are rebuilt, they will not produce enough to meet the projected demand for seafood. Aquaculture can supply this gap and at the same time create more jobs and revenues for our coastal communities.

- This is not a rush to the offshore by NOAA -- NOAA intends to have a balanced aquaculture program that addresses coastal, onshore, and offshore; shellfish and finfish farming; as well as enhancement activities that support commercial and sport fishing and endangered species restoration.

There is still much work to do. Based on what I have heard from constituents so far – and this was reinforced by the flurry of press reports on the offshore bill – it will be very important to set a context for the offshore aquaculture discussion:

- What do we know about the role of marine aquaculture in meeting global seafood demand?
- What types of regulatory frameworks are available to enable aquaculture to proceed within the context of protecting the environment, safeguarding wild stocks, and balancing multiple uses?
- What do we have good research on?
- What's missing from the research?
- Seafood is a very healthy source of protein: What is needed to grow this market?

These are all essential questions, questions that will be examined today. And I think we have good answers for them. NOAA is committed to helping frame the discussion and make sure it based in facts – not fiction.

So, as I see it, today's conference is an excellent opportunity to launch the next generation of aquaculture. What we will hear from experts today will address this spectrum of issues – including demand-supply scenarios, industry and seafood business perspectives, environmental and scientific issues, and regulatory or governance options – and more.

So, let's get to it!

Thanks again.